

- I. There are many images in the Book of Revelation, but some stand out from the rest, as if the montage of images pauses for a moment because it is so critical for us to stop and reflect on this one.
  - A. The image of the Rider on the White Horse is one of those.
  - B. We're going to spend time thinking about what this image means because it is central to the life of the New Church
  - C. How we think of the Lord, and specifically how we think of Him as He reveals Himself in His Word, defines what each of us does in our lives and what the church becomes in us
- II. "Now I saw heaven opened, and behold, a white horse. "
  - A. The focus in this image is not the rider, who is clearly the Lord, but the horse itself
  - B. Horses, we are told, are a symbol for our understanding of the way it is
    1. Horses were used to take you where you want to go, just as you use your mind to take you where you want to go or to figure out what you want to do
    2. So from the start we know this story is about the activity of our minds
  - C. Because the name of rider was "the Word of God," it is our understanding of the Word
    1. And because it is a *white* horse, our reading said, it is the inner meaning of the Word, the symbolic meaning that makes a story like this have any relevance to our lives
  - D. Each time we see anew the living truth in a part of the Word, the Lord comes to us again. This is His Second Coming – the spirit of truth within the literal teachings of the Word
    1. You could say it is about seeing the Lord in everything in the Word
- III. Let's go through some of the images, each talking about a different element of the Word
- IV. "His eyes were like a flame of fire" we are told.
  - A. Eyes also stand for our understanding of truth, but eyes with a flame of fire are truth that has love within it
  - B. The theme of this story is that truth from the Lord always has love behind it
  - C. We can see truth in the abstract, or see a cold fact and think we understand something, but that is not so.
  - D. Truth apart from love is false. It is a lie.
  - E. When we love a truth we see it in the context of what good that truth urges us to do, and we see it in the context of the good it does for people
    1. Until we see that we do not really understand the truth
    2. And if we do not see the love within a truth we also do not really understand the deeper meaning
  - F. Consider a time when you saw someone else doing something wrong
    1. You knew the truth – it was clear that what they were doing was wrong
    2. But consider now the attitude you had at the time

- a. If you were focusing on the person's error, likely there was not as much love in your eyes as you would want
- b. How would you view that person differently if you had love?
- c. Or to put it differently, how would you respond differently if you were doing what the Lord gave you that truth for? If the Lord were present in your thinking?
  - (1) You'd still see the error, to be sure, but might you approach the person differently? Might you be sure not to pass on what you saw to others?

3. The action you take might be similar in either case, but if you take the time to see the goodness in a situation, you will respond with far more compassion and justice, even if it only shows in your private heart.

G. The truth is true only when we see the goodness that motivates it.

H. So think of the truth in the Lord's Word as something spoken to you by a God of love, love visible in His eyes

V. "He had a name written that no one knew except Himself"

A. There are secrets about the Lord and His Word that only He knows

B. And He shows those truths only to those who are ready

1. This is so hard for us because probably most of you have wanted to know what the Word meant and been unable to see relevance or meaning

C. Much of Scripture does not have an obvious spiritual message

1. What do dietary laws have to do with eternal truth? Does the Lord really care if we eat pork? Did He ever really care? It is hard, on the surface, to see the Lord in those laws

2. It is the same with this vision of a rider with a sword coming out of His mouth.

D. When we strive to look beyond the surface, as we are doing now, we start to have a discussion about something completely different. We talk about our understanding of truth rather than a horse, or about rules for spiritual health rather than natural dietary rules.

E. But you can't get there with a formula. We sometimes want the key to the internal meaning of the Word as if you can say, "Horse means understanding and sword means truth" and through knowing the symbolism in each item come to a sight of the internal meaning of the Word

F. But that is not how it works. New Church teachings says we need three things to see the inner meaning:

1. A true understanding of the literal meaning of the Word. In other words, if we don't believe that living a good life contributes at all to our salvation, our concept of religion is so twisted that we cannot see deeper truth.

2. We need to know the science of correspondences, namely that a horse symbolizes the understanding, and why

3. And then we need enlightenment

a. Enlightenment is the light the Lord shines into our minds when we are ready in both mind and heart to see His truth

4. Mark Twain wrote, "When I was a boy of fourteen, my father was so ignorant I could hardly stand to have the old man around. But when I got to be twenty-one, I was astonished at how much he had learned in seven years."

G. We can hear a truth stated in church that we have been told many times, but this time it makes sense. It's not the minister who did that. It's our inner state, now receptive of light from the Lord.

1. The Lord gives us a sight of truth only when we are ready
2. That means we need to approach the Word with patience and humility
3. It also means we have to approach it regularly because enlightenment is not guaranteed. You may see something today and tomorrow you are not receptive. So if you show up at the page regularly you give the Lord the chances to show you what you need

VI. The rider "was clothed with a robe dipped in blood"

A. A garment is also a symbol for truth, but in this context it stands for external truths, because a garment clothes the body, the internal truths.

B. The blood in which this garment had been dipped stands for the hate & violence done to the literal teachings in the Word when they have been twisted to support selfish ways of living

C. People can & have proved just about anything from the Word, from witch burnings, to slavery, to unjust wars. How could the Word have been used to support slavery or apartheid? Yet it was!

D. Perhaps the most amazing distortion of the Word is the belief that we can be saved by faith apart from what we do. The Word from start to finish tells us to live a good life because we will be judged by our actions.

E. The relevance for today is that we need to approach the Word with respect, realizing that we bring our own baggage to it. We must be careful to do no violence to its meaning and intent.

F. Ask yourself how often you bring your cultural bias to the Word. We all do, so we need to look out for ways we might do violence to the Word, making it say what it does not.

G. In other words, to truly understand the Word we must be humble in reading it

VII. "Out of His mouth goes a sharp sword."

A. The world has a love affair with ambiguity right now.

1. Some of this is healthy. It is good to move away from rigid black & white thinking
2. But we can go too far such that truth loses its power because it is always qualified. This is like a dull blade.

B. But the Lord gives us a sharp sword, truth that can cut through the morass of troubles that beset us

C. Each of us has a limited understanding of the truth, but if we hold true to the basics, truths we can all understand, we will have a sharp sword that can cut through the falsities that assail us

D. Basic truth say that infidelity destroys marriage, and that lust can do so too

- E. Basic truth says to be honest and that means to pay all the taxes you owe
  - 1. The core of spiritual living is not complicated
- F. When we listen to the Lord, really listen, a lot of ambiguity falls away.
- VIII. "He Himself treads the winepress of the fierceness and wrath of Almighty God"
  - A. This is the least self-evident element of this vision, and I will give the inner meaning without explanation. It is describing how the Lord lived out every element in the Word so that the He became the embodiment of those truths
  - B. Because of that, each story in the Word is telling us not just about our own lives and struggles, but about His.
    - 1. And within each story He is fully present.
- IX. Let's return to our reading: The basic message is this: When we see the inner meaning we see the Lord in the Word
  - A. He is not a book, just as the Word is not really a book.
  - B. That book is a vehicle for opening our minds up to the truth that it contains and embodies
  - C. And that truth is a vehicle for opening our hearts to the love that it contains and embodies
  - D. And that love is the infinite God of the universe touching us
- X. "Now it is permitted to enter with understanding into the mysteries of faith."
  - A. What a blessing that everyone here can go to the Word for him- or herself & see inner truth there, truth that leads to a good life.
  - B. This vision give us ways to approach that search in the Word:
  - C. Can you see the goodness in the truth?
  - D. Do you recognize it as a gift from God – not as something you have by right, but something you humbly ask for?
  - E. Do you recognize that it is easy to confirm what you want to see and so dip the garment in blood? This means reading the Word involves setting aside your own agenda as much as possible.
  - F. Are you prepared to let the Word speak to you in clear ways that cut through ambiguity and wavering in your life?
  - G. And are you willing to engage with the Word consistently and devotedly enough that you can come to see the central feature of the Word: You God speaking to you in it?
  - H. If nothing else, go home today and reread that portion of Revelation 19, letting each image sink in. See if understanding a bit of the inner meaning makes a static image come alive.
- XI. What can each of us do to respect the Word in our lives and to turn to it? It is the main way of seeing the Lord Jesus Christ and learning from Him
 

How sweet are Your words to my taste, Sweeter than honey to my mouth!  
 Through Your precepts I get understanding; Therefore I hate every false way.  
 Your word is a lamp to my feet And a light to my path.  
 I have sworn and confirmed That I will keep Your righteous judgments. Ps 119

Rev 19:11-16 Now I saw heaven opened, and behold, a white horse. And He who sat on him was called Faithful and True, and in righteousness He judges and makes war. His eyes were like a flame of fire, and on His head were many crowns. He had a name written that no one knew except Himself. He was clothed with a robe dipped in blood, and His name is called The Word of God. And the armies in heaven, clothed in fine linen, white and clean, followed Him on white horses. Now out of His mouth goes a sharp sword, that with it He should strike the nations. And He Himself will rule them with a rod of iron. He Himself treads the winepress of the fierceness and wrath of Almighty God. And He has on His robe and on His thigh a name written: KING OF KINGS AND LORD OF LORDS.

Apocalypse Revealed # 820. *Then I saw heaven opened, and behold, a white horse.* This symbolizes the spiritual sense of the Word revealed by the Lord and the deeper meaning of the Word thereby disclosed, which is the coming of the Lord.

Seeing heaven opened symbolizes a revelation by the Lord and a disclosure then .... A horse symbolizes an understanding of the Word, and a white horse a deeper understanding (no. 298). And because this is the symbolic meaning of a white horse, and a deeper understanding of the Word is an understanding of the spiritual sense, therefore that sense is here symbolized by the white horse.

This is the coming of the Lord, because that sense makes it clearly apparent that the Lord embodies the Word, that the Word deals with Him alone, that He is God of heaven and earth, and that the New Church originates from Him alone.

The Lord told His disciples that they would see the Son of Man coming on the clouds of heaven with glory and power (Matthew 17:5, 24:30, 26:64; Mark 14:61, 62; Luke 9:34, 35, 21:27; Revelation 1:7; Acts 1:9, 11). And the Lord said this also when He spoke with His disciples about the culmination of the age, which is the final period of the church when a judgment takes place.

Everyone who does not think beyond the literal sense believes that when the Last Judgment arrives, the Lord will appear in clouds of the sky, accompanied by angels and the blowing of trumpets. But this is not the meaning. Rather it means that the Lord will appear in the Word, as can be seen from the exposition above (in nos. 24 and 642), and He appears clearly in the Word's spiritual sense. He appears not only as being an embodiment of the Word, that is, of Divine truth itself, or as being inmost present in the Word and in everything springing from it, but also as being a single God, having the Trinity in Him, thus as being the only God of heaven and earth. Moreover, it appears also that He came into the world to glorify His humanity, that is, to make it Divine.